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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/899,302	07/06/2001	Geert Maertens	2752-48	3516

7590 07/25/2003

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EXAMINER

WHISENANT, ETHAN C

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

1634

DATE MAILED: 07/25/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	09/899,302	MAERTENS ET AL.	
Examiner	Art Unit		
Ethan Whisenant, Ph.D.	1634		

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on 26 March 2003.

2a) This action is **FINAL**. 2b) This action is non-final.

3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4) Claim(s) 24-27 is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) 26 and 27 is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5) Claim(s) 25 is/are allowed.

6) Claim(s) 24 is/are rejected.

7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10) The drawing(s) filed on 19 April 2002 is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

11) The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) approved b) disapproved by the Examiner.
If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.

12) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

13) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a) All b) Some * c) None of:

1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. 09/378,900.
3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

14) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application)

a) The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.

15) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

1) Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____
4) Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
5) Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6) Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

1. The applicant's Response (filed 26 MAR 03) to the Office Action has been entered. Following the entry of the claim amendment(s), **Claim(s) 24-27** is/are pending. Rejections and/or objections not reiterated from the previous office action are hereby withdrawn. The following rejections and/or objections are either newly applied or reiterated. They constitute the complete set presently being applied to the instant application.

CLAIMS WITHDRAWN FROM PROSECUTION

2. The newly submitted claims [i.e. **Claim(s) 26-27**] are directed to an invention that is independent or distinct from the invention originally claimed.

Since applicant has received an action on the merits for the originally presented invention, this invention has been constructively elected by original presentation for prosecution on the merits. Accordingly, **Claim(s) 26-27** withdrawn from consideration as being directed to a non-elected invention. See 37 CFR 1.142(b) and MPEP § 821.03.

35 USC § 102

3. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that may form the basis for rejections set forth in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(a) the invention was known or used by others in this country, or patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country, before the invention thereof by the applicant for a patent.

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

(e) the invention was described in a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent, or on an international application by another who has fulfilled the requirements of paragraphs (1), (2), and (4) of section 371(c) of this title before the invention thereof by the applicant for patent.

35 USC § 103

4. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103, the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligations under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of potential 35 U.S.C. § 102(f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 103.

CLAIM REJECTIONS UNDER 35 USC § 102/103

6. **Claim(s) 24** is/are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Sommer et al. (1989).

For the following prior art rejection claim 24 has been interpreted as follows: Claim 24 is drawn to an isolated polynucleic acid which will specifically hybridize with any of SEQ ID NOs: 55 – 81 or the complements thereof under conditions allowing discrimination of up to 1 nucleotide mismatch. Sommer et al. teach the minimal homology requirements for PCR priming (i.e. specific hybridization). Sommer et al. teach that a 17-mer requires at least three homologous nucleotides at its 3' end for successful priming. Note that the first oligo recited in Table 1 is a 17-mer with a sequence which reads 5'- TCGAACATCGCAGCTA-5'. Using the logic set forth in Sommer, all that is required for specific priming (i.e. hybridization) is a sequence of 5' -- TAG -- 3'. Note that each of SEQ ID NOs: 55 – 81 comprise the a sequence 5' -- TAG -- 3' at nucleotide positions 44-46. Therefore, it can be said that Sommer et al. teach an isolated polynucleic acid which will specifically hybridize with any of SEQ ID NOs:

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55 – SEQ ID NO: 81 or the complement thereof under conditions allowing discrimination of up to 1 nucleotide mismatch. Admittedly none of the oligos taught by Sommer are perfectly homologous to or complementary with any of SEQ ID NOs: 55 - 81, however this limitation is not a requirement of the claimed invention.

7. Applicant's traversal of the rejection of Claim 24 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by Sommer et al. (1989) or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Sommer et al. (1989) has been fully and carefully considered but is not deemed to be persuasive.

In response to the applicant's traversal, the examiner points the applicant to the MPEP at 2111 which states in part "During patent examination, the pending claims must be "given their broadest reasonable interpretation consistent with the specification." In re Hyatt, 211 F.3d 1367, 1372, 54 USPQ2d 1664, 1667 (Fed. Cir. 2000). The applicant always has the opportunity to amend the claims during prosecution, and broad interpretation by the examiner reduces the possibility that the claim, once issued, will be interpreted more broadly than is justified. In re Prater, 415 F.2d 1393, 1404-05, 162 USPQ 541, 550-51 (CCPA 1969)". The examiner contends that his interpretation while broad is reasonable.

NONSTATUTORY DOUBLE PATENTING

8. The nonstatutory double patenting rejection is based on a judicially created doctrine grounded in public policy (a policy reflected in the statute) so as to prevent the unjustified or improper timewise extension of the "right to exclude" granted by a patent and to prevent possible harassment by multiple assignees. See In re Goodman, 11 F.3d 1046, 29 USPQ2d 2010 (Fed. Cir. 1993); In re Longi, 759 F.2d 887, 225 USPQ 645 (Fed. Cir. 1985); In re Van Ornum, 686 F.2d 937, 214 USPQ 761 (CCPA 1982); In re Vogel, 422 F.2d 438, 164 USPQ 619 (CCPA 1970); and, In re Thorington, 418 F.2d 528, 163 USPQ 644 (CCPA 1969).

A timely filed terminal disclaimer in compliance with 37 CFR 1.321(c) may be used to overcome an actual or provisional rejection based on a nonstatutory double patenting ground provided the conflicting application or patent is shown to be commonly owned with this application. See 37 CFR 1.130(b).

Effective January 1, 1994, a registered attorney or agent of record may sign a terminal disclaimer. A terminal disclaimer signed by the assignee must fully comply with 37 CFR 3.73(b).

9. **Claim(s) 24** is/are rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over Claims 7 of US 6,495,670. Although the conflicting claims are not identical, they are not patentably distinct from each other.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

10. **Claim(s) 25** is/are deemed to be allowable in light of the applicant's amendment filed 26 MAR 03.

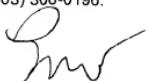
The applicant is the first to teach an isolated HCV virus characterized by any of the 5' UTR nucleotide sequences selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 55 to 81 (i.e. the applicant is the first to teach an isolated HCV virus comprising any of the 5' UTR nucleotide sequences selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NO: 55 to 81).

CONCLUSION

11. **Claim(s) 25** is/are allowable while **Claim(s) 24** is/are rejected and/or objected to for the reason(s) set forth above.

12. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Ethan Whisenant, Ph.D. whose telephone number is (703) 308-6567. The examiner can normally be reached Monday-Friday from 8:30AM -5:30PM EST or any time via voice mail. If repeated attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, W. Gary Jones, can be reached at (703) 308-1152.

The fax number for this Examiner is (703) 746-8465. Before faxing any papers please inform the examiner to avoid lost papers. Please note that the faxing of papers must conform with the Notice to Comply published in the Official Gazette, 1096 OG 30 (November 15, 1989). Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application should be directed to the group receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0196.



ETHAN WHISENANT
PRIMARY EXAMINER